

Rare Plants of Louisiana



Lindera melissifolia – pondberry Laurel family (Lauraceae)

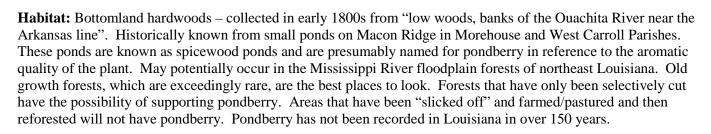
Rarity Ranks: SH/G2/Fed. listed endangered **Range:** AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MO, MS, NC, SC

Recognition:

- 1) Deciduous, thicket-forming shrub with green stems and alternate somewhat drooping leaves
- 2) Leaves resemble persimmon and smell like sassafras when bruised
- 3) Small clusters of yellow flowers appear before leaves erupt in March and are arranged alternately on the stems
- 4) Leaves have yellow fall color that makes the plant easy to spot
- 5) Stems often exhibit die-back due to a fungal pathogen
- 6) Fruits are bright red and appear August through Fall
- 7) Fruit stalks bear a swollen expanded disk at point of fruit attachment

Flowering Time: March – before leaves erupt; **Fruit** – August - Fall **Light Requirement:** Shade of forest understory (some populations may be on forest edges)

Wetland Indicator Status: OBL – almost always occurs in wetlands



Threats:

- 1) Conversion of habitat from forest to agriculture, which has happened on a large scale in LA
- 2) Alteration of hydrology e.g. leveeing natural ponds to hold more water or draining habitat
- 3) Off-target herbicide application from adjacent agricultural operations
- 4) Pollution of ponds by pesticides and fertilizer from adjacent agriculture

Beneficial management practices:

- 1) Buffer isolated ponds when harvesting timber and where ponds occur near agricultural operations
- 2) Utilize single-tree or group selection in forest management rather than clear cutting
- 3) Refrain from modifying hydrology of natural isolated ponds
- 4) Take care to minimize chances of isolated forested ponds being affected by aerial herbicide and pesticide application





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Pondberry in Delta National Forest, Mississippi. Here it occurs both on high sites with sweetgum and palmetto and in low wet swales with Nuttall oak.

References:

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